

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 04819 232139Z

21

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABERONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 4819

LONDON FOR HAVERKAMP, PARIS FOR MELONE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, NI

SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS

1. I PRESENTED CREDENTIALS AT NOON YESTERDAY AT DODAN BARRACKS FOLLOWING SIMILAR PRESENTATIONS BY AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE, INDONESIA AND MOROCCO. I WAS LUCKY - AND ALSO THE BENEFICIARY OF SOME FAST AND EFFECIENT FOOTWORK BY MEA AND EMBASSY STAFF. FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN WAITING WITH INCREASING ILL GRACE FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS.

2. GENERAL GOWON WAS RELAXED AND JOCLAR IN PUBLIC PORTION OF CEREMONY, WHICH WAS SOMEWHAT CURTAILED BY A SUDDEN DOWNPOUR THAT SENT THE HORSE GUARD TO SHELTER BUT DIDN'T PHASE THE PLATOON OF PEACOCKS THAT STRUTTED AROUND THE MILITARY BAND DURING THE ANTHEMS. REMARKING ON HIS GRATIFICATION THAT MY PRESENTATION HAD BEEN FITTED IN SO SOON AFTER MY ARRIVAL, GOWON SAID "EVEN SO, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LAGOS 04819 232139Z

YOU SEEM TO HAVE LOST SOME HAIR SINCE YOU ARRIVED." I REPLIED

THAT ON THE CONTRARY, THE BEARD WAS FLOURISHING.

3. GOWON WAS GRACIOUS BUT FRANK AND DIRECT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY. RESPONDING TO MY ASSURANCE OF THE IMPORTANCE THAT PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY PLACE ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NIGERIA, GOWON STATED HIS SATISFACTION WITH NATURE OF DIALOGUE MAINTAINED BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES DURING AMBASSADOR REINHARDT'S INCUMBENCY. HE SAID THAT, BASED ON WHAT HE KNEW OF MY BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE, HE THOUGHT THE CONDITION OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP "MIGHT NOW EVEN IMPROVE."

4. NOTING THE REFERENCE IN MY PREPARED REMARKS TO THE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNTRIES LIKE THE US AND NIGERIA IN THE BROAD INTERNATIONAL FORUM, GOWON SAID THAT HE BELIEVED ABOVE ALL IN "THE PRINCIPLE OF MORALITY" IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEALINGS OF STATES. HE SAID THAT DR. ARIKPO, HIS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER, DID NOT ALWAYS AGREE WITH HIM ON THIS POINT, CLAIMING THAT "TOO MUCH MORALITY WILL DESTROY YOU." GOWON SAID HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT THIS THESIS, ILLUSTRATING HIS POINT WITH A BIBLICAL QUOTATION THAT I DID NOT RECOGNIZE.

5. GOWON SAID HE HAD IMMENSE RESPECT FOR WHAT THE US HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA, AND PARTICULARLY FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. HE WAS AMAZED BY THE SECRETARY'S ENERGY. "DO YOU GIVE HIM SOME KIND OF SPECIAL PILLS?" HE NONETHELESS WANTED TO MAKE AN OBSERVATION WHICH HE HOPED WOULD NOT SOUND OVERLY CRITICAL. HE HOPED THE US WOULD NOT OVER-REACT TO AN OCCASIONAL FAILURE OR SETBACK. HE PERSONALLY WELCOMED US WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA AND HOPED WE WOULD NOT INTERVENE ELSEWHERE. "THE US HAS TREMENDOUS POWER; YOU MUST BE MOST CAREFUL WITH IT."

6. GOWON REVIEWED HIS GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN OVER THE EXCLUSION OF NIGERIA FROM GENERALIZED PREFERENCES. HE REMINDED ME OF HIS REQUEST TO BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN DURING THE LATTER'S RECENT PASSAGE THROUGH LAGOS, THAT CALLAGHAN RELAY NIGERIA'S CONCERN ON THIS POINT TO SECRETARY KISSINGER. HE HAD SINCE BEEN INFORMED "BY VARIOUS SOURCES" THAT HIS MESSAGE HAD BEEN TRANSMITTED. I ASSURED HIM THAT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LAGOS 04819 232139Z

SHARED HIS CONCERN AND WAS TAKING STEPS TO REMEDY THE PROBLEM. HE INDICATED HE HAD BEEN PLEASED TO LEARN THAT PRESIDENT FORD HUR SPECIFICALLY CITED NIGERIA IN THIS CONNECTION IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT. HE URGED THAT WE AVOID LUMPING NIGERIA TOGETHER WITH ALL OF THE OTHER OPEC COUNTRIES. "NIGERIA IS STILL A DEVELOPING COUNTRY." HE ASKED THAT WE LOOK AT EACH PROBLEM INVOLVING OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES ON AN "AD HOC BASIS" RATHER THAN LIMIT OUR OPTIONS BY ACROSS-THE-BOARD-ARRANGEMENTS. AT

THE SAME TIME, HE ADMITTED HE COULD APPRECIATE THE DILEMMA FACING THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN VIEW OF OUR CONCERN NOT TO APPEAR TO BE PURSUING ACTIONS DESIGNED TO BREAK UP OPEC SOLIDARITY.

7. GOWON SHOWED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE ROLE OF CONGRESS IN THE FORMULATION OF US FOREIGN POLICY. I DESCRIBED THE CHANGES THE LAST ELECTIONS PRODUCED IN THE HOUSE, AND SAID IT WAS MY OPINION THAT THIS CONGRESS WOULD SHOW A DEEPER INTEREST IN AFRICA THAN ITS PREDECESSOR. HE REFERRED TO A LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN TO CONGRESSMAN PASSMAN IN THE LATE 60S IN RESPONSE TO A CRITICAL STATEMENT THE CONGRESSMAN HAD MADE CONCERNING AID TO AFRICA. HE SPOKE WARMLY OF CONGRESSMAN ANDREW YOUNG AND ASKED TO BE REMEMBERED TO HIM, AS WELL AS TO MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT PERCY SUTTON.

8. AS A FINAL SUGGESTION, GOWON SAID HE URGED THE US TO GIVE ITS CLOSEST ATTENTION TO THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE SAID THAT US FAILURE FULLY TO APPLY UNITED NATIONS SANCTIONS AGAINST RHODESIA, COMBINED WITH THE VISIBILITY AND EXTENT OF THE US ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA, PRESENTED AN UNFORTUNATE IMAGE OF THE US IN SOME AFRICAN EYES. I REMINDED HIM OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION OPPOSING THE BYRD AMENDMENT, AND NOTED THE DIFFICULTY OF ASSESSING THE ROLE OF US INVESTMENT IN AND TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN INFLUENCING INTERNAL POLICIES. I TOLD HIM THAT SOME PEOPLE ARGUED THAT ECONOMIC PRESSURES MIGHT PRODUCE UNFORTUNATE REPERCUSSIONS ON BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND MIGHT AT ANY RATE HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE VORSTER GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THE IMAGE OF THE US WAS AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT A FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED AS THE ACTUAL PRACTICAL RESULT OF ANY POLICY. I TOLD HIM OF THE RECENT US DEMARCHE TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER ON NAMIBIA. HE DID NOT APPEAR TO KNOW ABOUT IT AND SEEMED PLEASED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LAGOS 04819 232139Z

9. GOWON SAID NIGERIA WAS MUCH IMPRESSED BY THE WORK OF KAUNDA, NYERERE, KHAMA, AND MACHEL IN THE CURRENT PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE WOULD LOOK TO THEM FOR GUIDANCE ON DIFFICULT QUESTIONS STILL TO COME, SUCH AS THE DEGREE OF INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY TO BE ACCORDED TO HOMELANDS.

10. IN CONCLUDING OUR CONVERSATION, GOWON SAID THAT I COULD EXPECT HIM AND MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO SPEAK FRANKLY WITH US ON MATTERS OF RACIAL EQUALITY AND DECOLONIZATION IN AFRICA, THE TWO ISSUES ON WHICH HE THOUGHT MUCH OF THE US IMAGE THROUGHOUT AFRICA WOULD DEPEND. BY THE SAME TOKEN, HE WARNED AGAINST JOURNALISTS, CIVILIAN LEADERS, STUDENTS AND OTHERS IN NIGERIA WHO WOULD PAINT AN UNFAIR PICTURE OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS. IF SUCH INSTANCES CAME TO OUR ATTENTION,

HE HOPED WE WOULD SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT
"BEFORE MAKING UP YOUR MINDS."

11. GOWON ASKED THAT HIS PERSONAL GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES
BE CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER.
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